Make Syllabi Work For You!

Tools and Methods for Liaison Librarians

Andrea Berg, University of Washington MLIS, 2024

Meet the team

ANDREA BERG
Capstone Researcher

- University of Washington MLIS student based in Portland, Oregon
- Interest in academic librarianship and digital scholarship
- Background working with non-traditional students and adult learners

PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Sponsor Organization

- Oregon's largest academic institution (50,000 students)
- Under-resourced librarians facing new liaison assignments as part of a reorganization
- **Faculty Librarian Sara Robertson** sees an opportunity in the new syllabi repository

Why syllabi analysis?

Syllabi analyses have long been used by librarians to inform collection development and information literacy instruction. However, time-intensive manual syllabi analyses have only been viable in smaller institutions with dedicated librarian capacity. Community college librarians, who tend to serve large institutions with limited capacity, have been unable to benefit from this approach.

Portland Community College librarians saw an opportunity to take advantage of a new internal syllabi repository to better understand their updated liaison assignments. But they needed to find a method that fit the constraints of their institutional context.

My objective

Empower Portland Community College librarians to gain information about their liaison assignments through an accessible automated syllabi analysis method.

My approach

- **Review the literature on manual and automated syllabi analysis**
  - The first automated syllabi analysis was conducted in 2017, making this a relatively new area of study
- **Conduct a needs assessment**
  - Constraints included: No file pre-processing, no programming experience required, no licensing fees. Needs included: Highly flexible search capabilities, both big picture and granular reports
- **Test potential tools**
  - I tested tools from within the syllabi analysis literature as well as text mining tools developed for other contexts

Key outcomes

- **Identifying the Syllabi Information Literacy Miner tool**
  - The Syllabi Information Literacy Miner is an open-source text mining tool developed and made available open access by librarians at Baylor University. This tool met all of our criteria: Flexible search features with customizable fields, useful big picture and granular reports, zero file pre-processing, zero licensing fees, and zero programming required.
- **Customizing the tool to meet PCC's needs**
  - I developed three custom versions of the tool with PCC-specific keyword searches answering priority questions identified by librarians. I also collaborated with the librarians at Baylor University to add a Google Drive upload feature to accommodate PCC's needs.
- **Developing clear, accessible documentation**
  - I created extensive written documentation, two video tutorials, and advanced search aids

Evaluation of my experience

In addition to successfully completing the objective of my Capstone project by developing an accessible automated syllabi method for PCC librarians to use to inform their work, **the highlight of my experience was the level of community engagement with this project.**

- Ten out of twelve faculty librarians participated in the needs assessment, and twenty two library staff attended my final presentation of the tool, including the Director of PCC Libraries.
- Baylor University librarians were extremely generous with their time and knowledge, and eager to collaborate with me to increase the use of their tool
- My Capstone sponsor and I presented our findings at the 2024 Oregon Librarian Association Conference to a highly engaged audience of academic librarians from across the state

Make syllabi work for you, yes - you!

Find all materials from my 2024 Oregon Librarian Association Conference presentation available at this link:

https://bit.ly/OLA-Syllabi-Docs

You'll find: Custom Syllabi Information Literacy Miner templates, written documentation and links to videos, advanced search aids, a workshop handout, and my presentation slides

Thank you!